

Getting To School Safely

THE FIVE KEY DANGERS KIDS FACE

1 Lack of Seat Belt and Child Safety Seat Use

🍏 **Motor vehicles are the leading cause of death for school-age children.** In 1999, nearly 5,700 children ages 5-18 died in traffic crashes. On average, 16 children were killed every day. Many of these tragic deaths could have been avoided. For example, of the children ages 5 to 9 who died in crashes in 1999, 40 percent were completely unbuckled.

🍏 **Many parents switch their children from safety seats to seat belts too early.** Safety seat use for children from ages one to four is 91 percent. However, restraint use drops to 72 percent for children ages 5-15. Most children ages 5-8 are too small to fit in an adult-sized seat belt. They should ride in a booster seat.

2 Busy Streets, Unsafe Motorists

🍏 **Pedestrian incidents are the second leading cause of accidental death among children ages 5-14.** In 1999, 559 pedestrians ages 5-18 were killed after being struck by a motor vehicle - 109 of those deaths took place during normal school transportation hours in the 1998-1999 school year.

🍏 **More school-age pedestrians are killed in the late afternoon than in the morning. Most deaths occurred at non-intersection locations.**

3 Low Bicycle Helmet Use

🍏 **In 1999, 260 bicyclists ages 5-18 were killed in crashes with motor vehicles.** The fatality rate for these young bicyclists was nearly double the rate for all bicyclists. Most of the bicyclists ages 5-18 killed or injured while riding were boys (80 percent). **Children are more likely to die from a bicycle injury between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. (46 percent) than any other time of day.**

🍏 **Head injury is the leading cause of death in bicycle crashes and is the biggest cause of bicycle-related permanent disability.** More children, ages 5-14 go to hospital emergency rooms for injuries associated with bicycles than with any other sport.

4 School Bus Stops

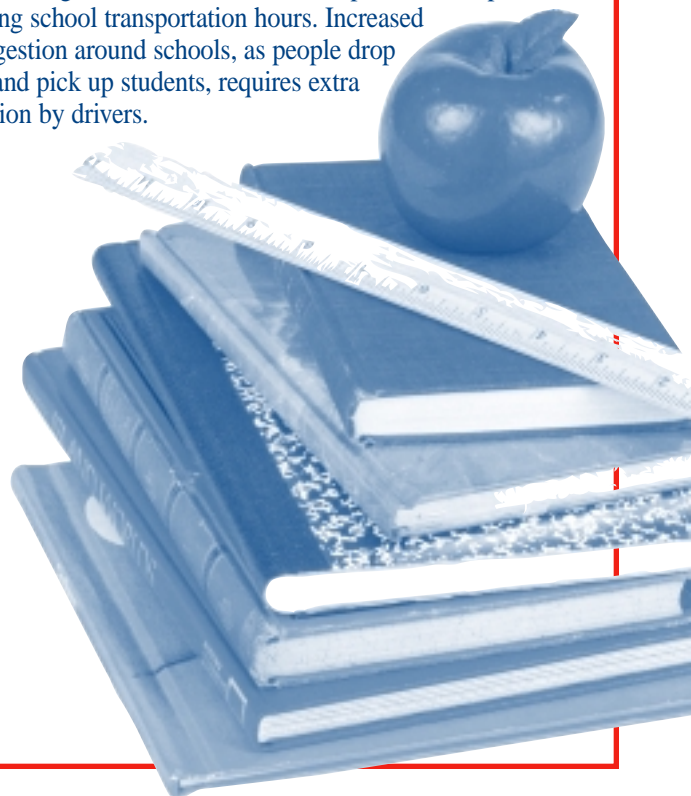
🍏 **School buses are the safest form of transportation for children.** Nearly 24 million students ride buses to school every day. **In fact, getting on or off the bus is more dangerous than the ride itself.** Many injuries occur when children walk into the driver's "blind spot," an area 10 feet around the bus.

🍏 **Most bus-related pedestrian deaths occur in the afternoon.** More than 40 percent occur between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. when children are going home. Fifty percent of school bus-related pedestrian fatalities were children between 5 and 7 years old.

5 School Drop-Off Zones

🍏 **Normal school transportation hours are the most dangerous time of the school day for children.** In the 1998-1999 school year, 864 children died between the hours of 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

🍏 **The main entrance area of schools is one of the most dangerous transportation zones.** This area combines all of the dangers listed above into a compressed time period during school transportation hours. Increased congestion around schools, as people drop off and pick up students, requires extra caution by drivers.



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THE TOP TEN STEPS TO KEEP KIDS SAFE

Motor Vehicles

- 1 Use the correct child safety seat or seat belt for every child.** Even when transporting children a short distance, never allow anyone, including yourself, to ride unbuckled.
- 2** For children between 40-80 pounds, use a booster seat with a seat belt. **Children age 12 and under should sit in the back seat where it is safest.**

Pedestrians

- 3** Parents often overestimate their children's pedestrian skills. **Children ages 10 and under should not cross an intersection without supervision.** Children are at risk for pedestrian injury because they are exposed to traffic threats that exceed their thinking skills. Also, children are impulsive and have difficulty judging speed and distance.
- 4 Teach children to stop at a curb and look LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT for traffic before proceeding.** Make sure children have safe play areas away from traffic such as fenced playgrounds and yards. Also, teach children to Stop, Look and Listen for trains before crossing railroad tracks and to never play on or near the tracks.

Bicycles

- 5 Always require children to wear a correctly fitted bicycle helmet.** And be a role model; wear a bicycle helmet, too!
- 6 Make sure that children learn the bicycle "rules of the road" at the same time they learn how to ride a bicycle.** Buy a bike that is the right size, not one that the child has to "grow into."

School Buses

- 7** Make sure children get to the bus stop at least five minutes early. **Teach children to ask the bus driver for help if they drop something near the bus (if a**

child stoops to pick up something outside the bus, the driver cannot see the child). Teach them to take "five giant steps" out from the front of the bus before crossing the street.

- 8 Work with local police to enforce and publicize school bus laws for motorists.** Most states require motorists in both directions to stop when a school bus displays flashing red warning lights and extends the stop signal arm. Vehicles may not legally pass until the flashing lights are turned off and the stop arm is retracted.

School Drop-Off Zones

- 9 Work with school officials to create a safe school drop-off area.** Arrange for crossing guards or help organize student safety patrols. Make crosswalks more visible by adding broad striped lines.
- 10** If the school drop-off zone has heavy traffic or a high speed limit, work with local officials to reduce speed limits and post flashing warning signs. **Ask the police to hold high-profile enforcement actions in school zones and to alert the public about the laws and the dangers of driving too fast near schools.**

